



*God's Man On The Road*

by

RAYMOND SHAHEEN

A  
SERIES  
OF  
SIX  
OR  
SEVEN  
REFLECTIONS  
ON  
A  
CERTAIN THEME  
AS  
ECHOED ON OCCASION  
FROM THE PULPIT  
OF SAINT LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND  
1976

*To Our*

*SAINT LUKE FAMILY AND FRIENDS —*

FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS  
WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED BY  
YOUR FRIENDSHIP AS WE TRAVEL  
THE ROAD TOGETHER. IN AND THROUGH  
YOU WE BECOME INCREASINGLY  
AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF  
GOD'S-MAN-ON-THE-ROAD. WE  
ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL. WE WANT YOU  
TO KNOW IT. SO WE GREET YOU  
IN THIS WAY AT CHRISTMAS TIME,  
1976.

*YOUR PASTORS AND THEIR FAMILIES*

The Parsonage

919 Highland Drive  
Silver Spring, Maryland  
Raymond — Winifred

The Parsonage

1006 Dale Drive  
Silver Spring, Maryland  
David - Ellen - Timothy - Christopher

*" . . . and each man determines the way his  
soul will go —"*

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# God's Man On The Road

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(First in a series on a common text)

*Jesus turned to the twelve and said, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.*

— Luke 18:31

**T**HE HISTORY of the human race is the history of a road—this road—that road. You can't separate history from the roads that the history makers took . . . or made.

The world has never been the same since Hannibal with a pack of elephants headed for the passes. Think of the changes that set in since Christopher Columbus with three ships charted an oceanic course. Look at what occurred in the United States once there were those who heeded Horace Greeley's advice.

But no change can possibly compare with what happened when that Galilean Carpenter's Son took the road that went from Nazareth and eventually led to Jerusalem! Because of the roads He traveled, a dividing line, clear and sharp, has been drawn across the map of mankind itself. In truth, He can be called "God's-Man-On-The-Road."

Let us for the moment allow ourselves the use of sanctified imagination. Picture it this way as we read the classic King James translation: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." Jesus, calling the company of twelve to His side announces to them—"I suppose you wonder why I have called this meeting. Well, I've made a decision, and I want to tell you about it. But don't try to talk me out of it. Once you hear what I'm about to say, Peter will probably discourage the idea. Thomas, I'm certain that you'll think it a mistake. Nonetheless, I've made up my mind. We're heading for Jerusalem—we're hitting the road without delay. You are entitled to know what I know—once we are there all Hell will let loose. They'll trump up charges against me, take me by force, have a trial-of-sorts, ridicule me, kill me. They'll

think they can get away with it. Three days later they'll have an empty grave on their hands. Well, I see you don't understand what I'm saying to you. Be that as it may, I tell you: we're going up to Jerusalem!"

Whatever else is intended to come to us through the text, the element of decision must be immediately recognized. Jesus deliberately decided to take the road that led to Jerusalem.

IN GOD'S plan for salvation, Jerusalem was definitely scheduled. But Jesus did not accidentally end up there. He did not casually head in that direction. He chose that destination.

Good friend, be aware of the fact that God holds us responsible for the road we eventually choose as our pathway through life. This brief sermon has only one purpose: as Jesus chose His road in life, so God will deal with us according to the direction on which we decide.

Robert Frost expressed the element of decision superbly in a poem that he wrote entitled "Two Roads." You may recall how he came to a place where he pondered which of two paths he should take. Upon making his decision he immediately mused that a difference would set in just because of the choice he had made.

And your life, my life, has been determined by the direction we take. But the question remains: how can we tell which so-called road to take? That, of course, is a good question.

May I suggest at least three guidelines. First, pray that God may make it known to you. That's something we can understand about prayer. God does reveal His will for us. Second, read often those pages in the Holy Bible that give an account of how God pointed out the road that His grand and good followers took. Third, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, seek out the advice and counsel of people you can trust.

*. . . it is a truth that cannot be denied: there is in each of us an occasional desire to go far on the wrong road —*

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# Jerusalem Road

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(Second in a series on a common text)

*Jesus turned to the twelve and said,  
Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.*

— Luke 18:31

**R**OADS MAKE life interesting. Some are long. Some are short. Some are winding and narrow. Some are broad and well-marked. Some are smooth. Some are rough. Some have no exit. Some seemingly could lead to the end of the world. Some are old. Some are new. Some we travel at our own risk. Some are highly patrolled, well protected with emergency stations at certain intervals.

But roads in themselves, no matter how interesting otherwise, have significance primarily because of the people who use them. And people use them largely because of the direction they decide to take. And this means that we have to deal with the element of decision.

Talk about decision—happy indeed is the traveler on today's super highway who knows in advance just where he'll be wanting to turn. In a split second he can take the wrong clover leaf and spend an hour or so caught up in a rapidly moving flow of traffic which compounds for him endless confusion.

For the moment (and to our lasting good) let us now take Jesus as an example.

Jesus assured His disciples, as He gave them the advance word, that He knew exactly where He was headed. His followers are also expected to be certain of the destination that is meant for them.

Are we? Again and over so often we need to check our routing. Heaven is to be our destination. God at the very beginning set up the sign-posts, laid down the rules-of-the-road, sent out ahead of us trail blazers to mark the way, gave us Jesus Christ, the Trusted One, who says "Follow Me." It is so very, very obvious that He doesn't want

us to go to Hell. Look at all the effort He's expended to show us the way to Heaven!

But sad to relate, there is in every one of us, at some time or another, the desire to go far on the wrong road. And we do. Yet we know we're not meant for it. That's a healthy sign, honestly it is. Blessed a thousand times is that man who knows full well that he's not where he's meant to be.

LIFE TODAY is like one giant super-highway with its stream of people moving along at a furious rate. It is so easy to become confused. In a split second we can take a wrong turn as we fail to stay alert. Wherever we go, there are always others. Whether we like it or not, we may find ourselves going along with them only to discover to our deep regret that we've been heading in the wrong direction.

Is there any hope for the confused, the bewildered, the lost? Can Jerusalem Road be found anew? Can a man be set right once more?

Of course! That's precisely why Jesus decided so deliberately to take the road to Jerusalem. That is exactly why He did what He did once He arrived at His destination. Knowing full well that we would time and again miss the way, He kept to the road in our behalf. He made it all the way because He knew we couldn't.

There is hope for us since Christ finds us where we are. In our lostness we don't always know how far we are from where we are meant to be. But He has His own way of coming to us, of finding us.

Some times He may come to us as we remember what we were taught in the days of childhood. Maybe He'll find us as the strains of an old Gospel hymn are recalled. Years ago the wise ones said it pays to "Stop—Look and Listen." When lost, listen!

. . . bluntly put, only a fool thinks in terms of  
perpetual sunshine —



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## Perilous Journey

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(Third in a series on a common text)

*Jesus turned to the twelve and said, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.*

— Luke 18:31

AS SOON as they heard Him say "Jerusalem," it's a wonder they didn't try to talk Him out of making the trip. Especially, since He told them in advance what was going to happen—how it would all end. It was not at all a pretty picture.

Most of us get excited about any trip that promises to be a pleasant journey—delightful companions, ideal weather, clean accommodations, good food, remarkable scenery. That's about the way we picture it, unless we have cause to believe otherwise. Should it be something less than idyllic, then it is that we begin to look for some justification not to go. Let there be any indication of the ugly and the untoward and we'd much rather take our chances on staying at home!

In this case, Jesus spelled it all out for them as the Scriptures indicate. It is a matter of record that He also went to some pain to tell them how demoralized they'd be when the going got tough. He said something about every one of them pulling out. Who wants to undertake a journey whose ending is to be as deplorable as that? It is a wonder that they didn't try to talk Him out of it.

Undoubtedly, they did not attempt to dissuade Him because they were not realists enough to believe that it could be so ugly and difficult. Maybe a good many of us are superficial optimists; when we are given the "bad news" we just don't believe it because we don't want to believe it.

Or maybe they did not make a case against going because by this time they had come to believe that as long as He

was around, He'd pull them through any rough time. After all, He did have a very impressive track record in this regard. Look at all the storms He had calmed. Look at all the opposition He had encountered and the magnificent way He was able to cope with it. Look at the miracles that took place at His command. They had only to coast along. It was too wonderful to end. It had to go on forever. But Jesus said it would not.

The important thing is not whether they believed Him or not. The important thing lies in the fact that Jesus, knowing full well the peril and the price, did not flinch—did not avoid the issue at stake. He firmly decided on going.

And what is more, He said they were to go along. They, too, would be exposed to the trouble and turmoil that He would have to endure. Nor would He shield them from it.

HEREIN LIES the Christian dimension regarding life that needs to be recognized. Christians are meant to face the tension and the strain. There can be no living without it. Only a fool thinks in terms of perpetual sunshine. He was wise indeed who observed that "all sunshine makes the Sahara!"

In taking them along with Him to Jerusalem, He would show them how to face the deadly blows and how to handle the grip that evil would afflict. He would prove to them that obedience to God is rewarded; He would demonstrate before their very eyes that living and dying triumphantly are one and the same thing. Only in the arena of life-as-it-is (where sin, death and the devil operate) could He reveal to them beyond all question how the steadfast purposes of God prevail. Only after they would all forsake Him or deny Him or betray Him would they really know how great His love is. Perilous journey? Yes, but what a glorious ending!

. . . and it is at some risk that we forget that  
God never made us smart enough to make the big  
decisions all by ourselves —

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# Decisive Journey

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(Fourth in a series on a common text)

*Jesus turned to the twelve and said,  
Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.*

—Luke 18:31

**I**F THIS text means anything at all, it means decision.

Again and again we must recognize this basic element, this essential ingredient. Jesus suffered and died for our sins because of what finally took place in and about Jerusalem. But He just didn't "happen" to be in Jerusalem when all Hell seemingly was let loose. He just wasn't "casually" caught up in the situation that was so quickly fanned into flames. They didn't have to organize a posse or send out a select militia to comb the Judean hills or the Galilean plains in order to find Him and to force Him to appear before the authorities. We need to constantly remind ourselves of this simple and profound fact. He was in Jerusalem because He had made it a matter of decision, and what eventually took place there occurred as decisively as it did because God's Son intended to fulfill, to see to completion, the divine order that left its stamp upon Him even before He was born.

Look at the life of Jesus from any angle, and ever so frequently we see undeniable evidence of His deliberate willingness (that's another way of saying "decision") to do what was right in the eyes of the Heavenly Father. In fact, as the Scriptures put it on occasion, He gathered strength through obedience. ("My food is to do the will of Him who sent me").

Now we need to ask ourselves a very important question: how can we be certain that we are deciding in the way that is acceptable to God? How can we know what we ought to do when we are faced with the necessity of a decision as we travel through life from day to day?

**THERE MAY** be more than one way to answer this question. Allow me to

suggest a thing or two which can be sustained by Scripture.

First, we must always remember *who* we are. The Scriptures declare us "Children of God. Baptism spells this out for us clearly. When we see ourselves as God's children, we remind ourselves of the precious truth that He will hold us responsible for the decisions we make. Again the Scriptures declare: "We are not our own." Martin Luther we are told kept his sanity by saying to himself daily "I am baptized" which was his way of asserting that God claimed him—and among other things—held him responsible.

Second, we must likewise remember that God will enlighten us as we rely upon the Holy Spirit. God never made any of us smart enough to make the big decisions all by ourselves!

Third, we can be sure we are making the right decision if the greater good ensues to the greater number. The whole human race benefited by the decision that Jesus made when He went to Jerusalem since it was there that He became the sacrifice for the sins of the entire world! Scripture declares that "no man lives to himself, no man dies to himself." Good like evil has its social consequences. Every man's life affects the total family.

Our younger friends may be doing themselves and the rest of us an injustice when they say they want to do "their own thing." Should this mean freedom to make decisions without concern for the good of others—then it is downright diabolical.

Politicians or industrialists, capitalists or whatever it may be, who say "the public be damned" are serving the devil when they act without a concern for the general welfare.

Jesus set before us the example. He decided to do what He did that all of us could benefit by the way He lived, by the way He died.

*. . . sooner or later we'll quiet down long enough  
to hear the commanding voice of God: either  
out of respect or utter helplessness —*

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## Six Letter Word

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(Fifth in a series on a common text)

*Jesus turned to the twelve and said,  
Behold, we go up to Jerusalem,*

*— Luke 18:31*

**T**HE VERY sight (or sound) of some words command immediate attention.

I recall as a youngster how each year the local station-master would supply our three-storey brick school house (it accommodated all twelve grades!) with a brand new poster put out by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. The work of the artist might vary from year to year as improvements were made on the design of the locomotive, but the arresting words were never changed.

Grade crossing accidents were usually tragic, and school children in particular needed to be indoctrinated. There was no better way to make the impact than to portray the super-sized-iron-horse a-stride the wide track with the clear, curt, concise words: **STOP—LOOK—LISTEN.**

To this very day those words ring in my ears as I visually recall the poster. Words are meant to serve a purpose. Again and ever so often Jesus drew heavily upon certain words in order to command attention. Blessed indeed is that person who can still hear ringing in his ears across the pages of time the commanding words of Jesus. To give heed to them can mean the difference between life and death.

Consider now this six-lettered word before us which serves as the title for this brief meditation; **BEHOLD.** It invites free translation. Bear with me, please, as I suggest a thought or two which could hold us in good stead.

**BEHOLD**—it could mean the Son of God saying to us—**ATTENTION!** You know, don't you, that is one of the purposes which God deliberately performs in our behalf. We have a way of ignoring Him and his actions. We do this

at great peril. Lest we rush head-long into destruction as we travel through life, God has a way of calling to us—**PAY-ATTENTION-TO-ME**—to **MY WAY.** Forshame upon us that we are so pre-occupied that we should, so to speak, make it necessary for God to raise His voice in order to have us give Him heed. After all that word **BEHOLD** lends itself more to a shout than to a whisper, wouldn't you say?

**SOME BIBLE** scholars also translate this six-lettered word as **LISTEN.** And well they could and should. Here likewise it represents authority. God's voice does command respect. In His divine wisdom He thinks things through. He is never without a plan. But so often we are so busy with our own way of handling matters, framing resolutions, drafting statements, arguing vociferously with one another, blaming one another, that it is only as God speaks in commanding tones that can no longer be ignored that we quiet down with some measure of either respect or helplessness.

I'd go so far as to suggest that this one six-lettered word was His attempt to get them to **BELIEVE.** It could and should invite and encourage **TRUST.**

We do well to see it in this light especially as we consider the text in its setting. Jesus sought their attention, spoke to them authoritatively as they listened. But as He told the whole story, they did not understand either what He was telling them—or what it all meant. He would give them then little if any choice. The die was cast. They would be Jerusalem-bound whether they understood what was ahead or not. Yet they could afford to go with Him since He was to be trusted, to be believed. They ran into trouble, terrible trouble in Jerusalem, as soon as they forgot that He was believable. And so do we. That's why we need to listen and give Him attention as never before.

. . . we are what we are to no small degree  
according to the way we accept or reject the  
influence of those we meet along the way —

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# To Travel Together

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(Sixth in a series on a common text)

*Jesus turned to the twelve and said, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.*

—Luke 18:31

**R**EAD THE words of the text again. Notice at once that Jesus told the twelve that He wasn't going up to Jerusalem alone. They were going with Him.

And so it is. No man ever travels the road of life by himself—at least that is true from the Christian perspective. There is an exceedingly precious passage of Scripture that refers so beautifully and so properly to this fact regarding the life of Jesus—"and He chose them that they might be with Him."

Again and ever so frequently we do talk about the loneliness of Christ but that is not to imply that other people were denied access to Him or ruled out of His companionship. Occasionally we read about His going away to be by Himself—"to withdraw to a desert place"—but we dare not believe that He placed a low value on fellowship or relationship with others.

In the final analysis to think of Jesus is invariably to see other people looming upon the horizon at one time or another, for this reason or for that.

Just for the record: Recall His birth—while He remains central in the Bethlehem scene we must also reckon with Joseph, Mary, the Innkeeper, Shepherds, Wise-men, even the wicked king. Recall those early days of His ministry how He called this disciple, then that one until there were twelve in all. Recall the crucifixion—alone on the Cross? No—there were thieves on either side and a beloved disciple and a precious mother at His feet. Recall the Ascension—even His leave-taking from this earth was in the presence of a cluster of cherished friends.

The very Christ of God, unique as He was, is remembered to this day because

there were those who kept company with Him.

**NO MAN FROM** the Christian perspective, travels the road of life alone. And we need to learn so well the meaning from this page in the life of our Blessed Lord.

First, it reminds us of a need that is met by the fellowship we share as we travel together. In the company of others we gain the benefit of the cross-fertilization of mind and spirit. Properly understood, we draw inspiration and encouragement from one another. Is there not that holy reference to the fact that "God setteth the solitary in families"? In His plan for us it is declared that "it is not good for man to be alone." In His presence and under His guidance so frequently the disciples balanced out their strengths and weaknesses. And always He drew out their better side.

Second, the example of Jesus makes plain to us that we assume a responsibility for those whose lives we touch. God does hold us accountable for the way we chart the course that others take as they follow after us—whether we are aware of their marking the path that we have taken or not.

Third, there is no end to the good that comes when we affect another's life in Christ's name. Notice how Christ dealt with the disciples who benefited from His transforming relationship. They in turn allowed their influence to become operative in the lives of other people.

Each of us today, no matter what his station or fortune in life, is to a large degree the result of the influence of others—either according to the way we have accepted or rejected that influence. It can be as awesome as all that.

Christians are meant to walk so closely in the company of Jesus that His shadow will be cast upon others . . . and that in itself makes life worth living.

. . . the poor fellow! He found in the end that he really had to do some hard thinking about an answer stoutly given to a question he had asked so easily —



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# Risky Road

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(Seventh in a series on a common text)

*And Jesus answering said: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.*

—Luke 10:30

**I**T WAS one of those days. And, presumably, a disciple or two probably felt that the fellow really had it coming to him. They were there when Jesus put him in his place, shut him up, silenced all his arguments.

There are folks who enjoy talking about religious matters, posing all sorts of questions. They permit themselves a peculiar kind of delight in needling teachers and preachers.

We need to discuss religious truths, and there is merit in asking questions significantly. But we must never think that we can stop at the talking stage.

That is why Jesus so deliberately dealt with the chap who came with one question after another. The questions were good ones. They dealt with such things as eternal life and duty to God and to man. However, the fellow seemed to give the impression that one had done a good thing simply by talking about such things. So Jesus went on to straighten him out by proving the point that eternal life is not something that comes to us by talking. Rather it is to be experienced by risking one's life in an attempt to alleviate the misery of a victimized stranger on a road where robbers wait.

Undoubtedly, the key word here is risk. Few persons realize how significant the risk factor is in this whole concept.

Let's take a quick look at the story Jesus told as He straightened out the fellow who was putting questions to Him.

It is the unforgettable story of the man who was laid upon by robbers, avoided by some very religious persons, and ministered to compassionately by an outsider. You can read all about it in the 10th chapter of Luke.

In the telling of the story Jesus does two things. He sets the Good Samaritan before us as an excellent example to follow. And He suggests that the way to eternal life is like a road running from Jerusalem to Jericho!

And there's always a "Travel at Your Own Risk" sign along that route. Notice how the "good guy" in our story took one risk after another in being merciful on that robber-ridden road.

First, he risked his own life as he stopped to help. The robbers could have still been close by, using the recently victimized one as a decoy.

Second, he risked what he gave to the badly beaten one, since he never so much as asked if the fellow could afford such complete and costly attention. And it was a risk he took by never allowing the question of repayment to enter his mind.

Third, he risked the possibility of continued involvement. It wasn't enough to offer first aid on the spot, to put the injured man on his own donkey and get him safely to some haven. Rather, he told the inn-keeper to continue to meet the man's needs and "whatever thou spendest more . . . I will repay."

**IN MARKED** contrast the other two who traveled the road never so much as risked a minute of their time, an ounce of their energy, or the slightest sense of sympathy. They probably arrived at their church meeting on schedule and kept their attendance records unsullied as they freely talked about religious matters! And ironically enough, they probably slept undisturbed that night, thanking God that He had kept them from harm and danger as they traveled a dangerous road.

Jesus that day answered once and for all the question about eternal life. He said something about its being like a road one travels at the risk of having to show compassion. Such an answer, of course, takes religion far beyond the talking stage and puts us to shame when we seek easy answers to hard questions.

*Cover Photo*  
*by the Rudolph Schuetzlers*